

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5143

INFO USDOC WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

UNCLAS KUWAIT 1845

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, EALR, KU

SUBJECT: KUWAIT PORT SITUATION: PREFERENCE FOR CONFERENCE
VESSELS

REF: KUWAIT 539 AND PREVIOUS

1. KUWAIT PORT AUTHORITIES, IN AN EFFORT TO LESSEN
THE WORSENING PORT CONGESTION PROBLEM, HAVE INSTITUTED
WHAT AMOUNTS TO AN UNOFFICIAL PREFERENCE SYSTEM FOR
SHIPS BELONGING TO CONFERENCE ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS
THE "8900" GROUP. A DUAL WAITING LINE FOR SHIPS HAS
BEEN SET UP. CONFERENCE VESSELS UNLOAD AT BERTHS ONE
TO EIGHT AT SHUWEIKH (THE ORIGINAL PORT BUILT IN THE
1950S). NON-CONFERENCE VESSELS UNLOAD AT THE REMAINING
ELEVEN BERTHS (THE PHASE II "WESTERN EXTENSION" RECENTLY
COMPLETED). SINCE, HOWEVER, ON-SHORE FACILITIES HAVE NOT
YET BEEN COMPLETED ON PHASE II BERTHS (AND WON'T BE UNTIL
THE END OF 1976 AT THE EARLIEST), UNLOADING TIMES FOR THE
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TWO CLASSES OF VESSELS ARE DIFFERENT: 13 DAYS AVERAGE WAIT-

ING TIME FOR UNLOADING FOR CONFERENCE VESSELS; 25 DAYS FOR
NON-CONFERENCE VESSELS.

2. AS FOR NEW REGULATIONS REGARDING TRANSIT CARGOES
(REPORTED IN REFTEL), PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION HAVE BEEN
REPORTED. SHIPS HAVE EXPERIENCED DELAYS, AND TRAFFIC CON-
GESTION IN AND OUT OF THE PORT HAS INCREASED, BECAUSE TRUCKS
NECESSARY TO CARRY TRANSIT CARGO OUT OF PORT AREA WERE NOT
AVAILABLE. PORT DIRECTOR SUGGESTED THAT TRUCK SHORTAGES
MAY EXIST, BUT ANOTHER SOURCE INDICATED THAT POOR SCHEDULING
BY SHIPPING AGENTS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE.

3. AS FOR LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEM, PROJECTS TO
EXPAND KUWAIT'S CARGO PORT FACILITIES HAVE PROCEEDED SLOWLY.
THE SHUAIBA AREA AUTHORITY HAS ADDED TWO BERTHS TO THEIR
FACILITIES TO HANDLE GENERAL CARGO (I.E., CARGO NOT BOUND
FOR INDUSTRIES WITHIN AREA ITSELF). TENDERS WILL SOON BE
SUBMITTED ON PROJECT TO ADD SIX NEW BERTHS (IN A NEW JETTY
TO THE NORTH OF CURRENT FACILITIES) TO BE DEVOTED TO CARGO.
SOME SPEED-UP IN PLANS IS INDICATED BY S.A.A. DECISION TO
BUILD ALL SIX BERTHS AT ONCE. PREVIOUS PLANS CALLED FOR
PHASING OF PROJECT, WITH TWO BERTHS BEING BUILT AT A TIME.
MAJOR PORT EXPANSION PROJECT, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO BE
DELAYED. THE 20-BERTH NORTHERN EXTENSION IS STILL IN
THE PRELIMINARY STAGES, WITH DUTCH CONSULTANT AND MINI-
STRY OF PUBLIC WORKS STILL IN NEGOTIATION. ESTIMATES
OF START OF CONSTRUCTION OF EXPANSION FACILITIES NOW
STAND AT EARLY 1978.

4. COMMENT: PORT AUTHORITIES ARE CONFIDENT THAT PORT
SITUATION, FOLLOWING IMPOSITION OF TRANSIT AND CONFERENCE
REGULATIONS, WILL IMPROVE. DECREASE IN WAITING TIMES
HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED, BUT EVEN THESE DECREASES HAVE
BEEN BOUGHT AT EXPENSE OF KUWAIT'S REGIONAL ROLE AS IM-
PORTER FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. TRANSIT GOODS ARE
NOW DECREASING, AND THIS IS BOUND TO HAVE AN
ADVERSE EFFECT ON LOCAL IMPORTERS' OPERATIONS. SLOW PACE
OF EXPANSION, MOREOVER, IS NOT AN ENCOURAGING SIGN THAT
PROBLEMS ARE TEMPORARY.

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